

**Testimony Regarding
H.B. 6662, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget
Recommendations Concerning Education**

Lisa Hammersley, Executive Director
School and State Finance Project

Chairmen McCrory and Currey, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on H.B. 6662, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning Education.

We are at a critical time in Connecticut. The pandemic caused a massive disruption in the lives of our students and teachers. It exacerbated disparities that have existed for far too long and put on full display the vast differences in educational opportunities that are available to our youth throughout the state.

With newly released student demographic data, we also know the needs of Connecticut students are also increasing. Over 8,200 more students are now considered low-income and Connecticut public schools now serve over 4,500 more English Learners. The increasing needs of our students and public school districts, coupled with the looming fiscal cliff, has created an urgent need for investment in K-12 education. With fiscal safeguards in place and state coffers flush, now is the time to put more resources, more supports, and greater investment toward our future generations. Unfortunately, the governor's education implementer merely continues the status quo.

Students throughout Connecticut are just beginning to rebound from the devastating interruption to learning caused by COVID-19. Experts have repeatedly warned that the needs of students in the wake of the pandemic will assuredly outlast federal relief aid. School districts, out of necessity, have relied on this one-time funding to hire and retain teachers, paraprofessionals, and school counselors. They have used federal dollars to create new opportunities like tutoring and after-school programs. If districts must wait until 2028 to receive their full Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding, they risk losing essential staff and cutting necessary programs.

Furthermore, the governor's budget proposal would pause the phase-in of need-based funding for students attending state charter schools, which the legislature wisely passed in 2021. Currently, the state uses over 10 different funding mechanisms for students attending different types of public schools, and only the ECS formula takes into account the individual learning needs of students.

Where a child lives, or the type of public school they attend, should not dictate the opportunities available to them. I urge the Committee to reject this status quo and adopt,

and fully fund, a student-centered funding system that finally provides the full, need-based funding every Connecticut public school student deserves.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony on the governor's education budget implementer, and please feel free to reach out to me via the contact information below should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Lisa Hammersley
Executive Director
School and State Finance Project
lisa.hammersley@schoolstatefinance.org

About the School and State Finance Project

The School and State Finance Project is a nonpartisan, nonprofit policy organization that works collaboratively with policymakers, communities, and other key stakeholders to develop data-driven solutions that ensure all public school students receive equitable education funding that supports their learning needs.